DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 320 TM 026 057

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TITLE The Accelerating Literacy Program: 1994-95 Final Report. Publication Number 94.13.
INSTITUTION Austin Independent School District, TX. Dept. of Performance Audit and Evaluation.
PUB DATE Apr 96
NOTE 41p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Elementary School Students; Grade 4; Integrated Activities; Intermediate Grades; *Literacy; Low Achievement; Parent Education; Parent Participation; Portfolio Assessment; Program Evaluation; *Reading Achievement; *Resource Allocation; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education; Training; *Whole Language Approach
IDENTIFIERS *Austin Independent School District TX; Texas Assessment of Academic Skills

ABSTRACT

The Austin Independent School District (Texas) developed the Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) in 1993 to provide additional support for students who were having trouble passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in the elementary grades. The ALP operates on the principle of integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities into a whole language approach to instruction. It seeks to accelerate the learning process by building on student successes. The 13 campuses involved in the ALP were selected on the basis of poor performance by their fourth grade TAAS takers. Schools and teachers were allowed great latitude in designing a course of instruction to meet the needs of students through ALP. Overall, the program seems to have met most of its goals. All of the 28 teachers surveyed indicated that the students made somewhat more or much more progress than they would have in a typical period of instruction. Teachers were pleased with the training they received and with the portfolio approach used in the program. Records indicated that ALP students increased their reading text level and made statistically significant gains in overall reading skills. The majority of teachers (92.8%) indicated that they would continue to use program methods and materials. Recommendations for program improvement include improved parent training and participation, better resource allocation, and better running record keeping. Appendixes present tables of teacher and parent-trainer survey responses. (Contains 7 figures, 21 appendix tables, and 30 references.) (SLD)

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ACCELERATING LITERACY PROGRAM

1994-95

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The Accelerating Literacy Program: 1994-95 Final Report

Executive Summary

Austin Independent School District
Department of Performance Audit and Evaluation

Authors: Trina R. Robertson, L. David Wilkinson

Program Description

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) developed the Accelerating Literacy Program in 1993 to provide additional support for students who were having trouble passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in the elementary grades. At the time the program was developed, 13 Austin schools were either on the AISD "C" list (i.e., less than 25% of students passing all sections of the most recent TAAS) or on the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) list of schools that are "clearly unacceptable" (less than 20% of students passing all sections of the TAAS). Often students who do not pass the TAAS have started school without the same academic foundation to which some of their peers have had access. Failure for these schools begins much earlier than the fourth grade, when the schools do not bridge the gap in earlier grades between what the students know and what they need to know.

The Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) as developed by Evaluation Consultant Services (ECS) was chosen for implementation in the 1993-94 summer session because of its reported success in a comparable environment (i.e., the South Bay (CA) Union School District). The curriculum is flexible enough that it can be used as a stand-alone program (such as AISD's program) or as an adjunct to regular school year reading instruction.

The thematic principle upon which the program operates is that of integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities into a whole language approach to instruction. The program seeks to "accelerate" the learning process by building on students' successes. According to the theory of the program, when a teacher determines that a student has mastered text at a given level, the teacher should immediately challenge the student at a higher level. According to the ALP instruction manual, this objective is pursued through the following steps:

- Evaluating the reading process through miscue analysis;
- Applying the four types of reading in whole language instruction;[1]
- Using effective questioning strategies in guided process reading;
- Assessing and monitoring reading and writing behaviors; and
- Using predicting/confirming activities and mapping techniques that clarify thinking.

[1]The four types of reading in whole language instruction are: 1) Read Aloud, 2) Shared Reading, 3) Guided Process Reading, and 4) Silent Sustained Reading. These reading types were included in initial teacher training in 1994.

The 13 campuses involved in the Accelerating Literacy Program were selected on the basis of poor performance by their fourth-grade TAAS takers. Each campus, and in fact each teacher, was allowed great latitude in designing a course of instruction to meet the needs of the students. The level of coordination between classes varied from campus to campus, although in most cases periodic staff meetings were held. During these meetings, the lead teacher could facilitate strategy sessions, answer questions, and distribute materials. The frequency of these meetings was determined by the staff.

Major Findings

1. Overall, the program seems to have met most of its goals. All of the teachers surveyed indicated that the students made "somewhat more" (45%) or "much more" (55%) progress than they would have in a typical four-week period during the regular school year. Teachers were generally pleased with the training that they received, and the portfolios were used successfully in the program. Teachers reported 96.3% of the time that portfolios were accurate representations of the students' achievement during the program. (p. 18)

2. In spite of some problems with data collection, the running records indicate that ALP students increased their reading text level an average of 2.93 reading levels. (p.14)

3. Analysis of the ALP Developmental Checklist of Learning Indicators indicated that ALP students made statistically significant gains in their overall reading skills for the second consecutive year. (p. 14)

4. The one thing that the parent-training specialists seemed to want most from the District was more role clarification and training. Although a training session was offered for parent-training specialists before the 1993-94 summer program, no training was offered in conjunction with the 1994-95 program. (p. 18)

5. The program also accomplished one of TEA's stated goals--to train teachers so that more acceleration could take place in the regular classroom. (p. 18)

6. The overwhelming majority of teachers (92.8%) indicated that they would continue to use the methods and materials of the program during the regular school year. Teachers said that the record-keeping forms and the fact that the program methods are based in a whole language approach will be useful in the regular class. (p. 18)

7. Campus-based program managers were not the norm during the regular school year; as a result, some of the preprogram planning was not adequately handled. (p. 19)

Recommendations

1. In the future, it would help to have someone with the authority and responsibilities for planning the programs at each campus year round. Also, at least a half-time coordinator should be added to the program budget to work more closely with the individual campus programs during the year.

2. More attention should be paid to how resources best can be provided for all campuses. Part of a planning meeting could be dedicated to cross-campus discussion on this subject. Such a meeting should be held early in the planning process and commitments should be obtained from principals to make a certain level of resources available to the program staff during the summer.

3. The program could benefit from evolving to four longer classroom days with the fifth day being used for planning, and making parent contact.

4. It would also help the teacher-support aspect of the program if there were planning days after the program ended which teachers could use to debrief and develop strategy on transferring the program to their regular classrooms.

5. The problems with the use of running records indicate that many teachers need more guidance/training to use this assessment instrument.

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Management Responses

Recommendation #1 (Do not concur)

Funds are better utilized where they directly impact instruction. Principals are responsible for all programs at their individual campuses. For the 1995-96 Optional Extended Year Program, campuses will participate on a completely voluntary basis. Campus principals will be required to attend all planning meetings and assume responsibility for the program at his/her campus or delegate responsibility for program coordination to someone at the campus.

Recommendation #2 (Concur)

Principals are responsible for implementation of the program at his/her individual campus. Materials and resources will be discussed at the planning meeting for the 1995-96 Optional Extended Year Program planning meeting.

Recommendation #3 (Partial concurrence)

The need for planning is acknowledged. However, one hour of daily teacher planning time was allocated the second year of the program. It was the principal's responsibility to schedule planning time. Principals at individual campuses could have scheduled planning time to meet individual campus needs. The Parent Training Specialist was responsible for facilitating parent contact at the campus to which he/she was assigned. These issues will be addressed at the 1995-96 Optional Extended Year Program planning meeting for principals.

Recommendation #4 (Partial concurrence)

Follow-up planning and discussion is the responsibility of each individual campus and should be initiated by the principal. Principals will be reminded of this requirement at the Optional Extended Year planning meeting for principals.

Recommendation #5 (Concur)

Use of running records will be an optional campus assessment for the 1995-96 Optional Extended Year Program. Inservice training will need to be conducted at the campus level as needed. Use of Reading Recovery teachers for follow-up on running record training at individual campuses is recommended.

Open Letter Concerning Rétention Reduction and Acceleration

The issue of student retention (i.e., requiring a student to repeat the same grade level) has been a concern in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) for many years. Since 1984-85, AISD policy EIE (Local) has permitted the "placement" of elementary students in the next grade level in lieu of retention, provided that the placed student receive support from an alternative program to meet his/her identified needs. (Being *placed* is defined as the situation that occurs when an elementary student who has not met the requirements for passing his/her grade level is put in the next grade with the hope that further intervention will help the student catch up with her/his peers.) This option, and other alternatives to retention (e.g., transitional first grade and alternative placements) have long been encouraged in AISD, based on national and local research on the negative effects of retention for most students. Studies by the District's Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) beginning in 1981-82 found that retention is not beneficial to most students' long-term achievement and is associated with high dropout risk. (See the "Bibliography" for a list of retention-related publications by ORE.) AISD's retention rates have fluctuated since 1980-81 (the first year ORE began tracking retention rates), but over the last six years, retention rates have declined in all elementary and middle school grades and in grades K-12 overall.

Against this backdrop of long-standing District concern with retention, and the long-term decline in AISD retention rates, **it is difficult to render an unambiguous judgment on the effect of the Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP)**, the program AISD adopted with State Retention Reduction grant funds, **on the elimination of students' need to be retained.** Indeed, information gathered during the first-year evaluation of the program in staff surveys and informal interviews indicated that *very few of the teachers or principals would have retained first-grade students with or without the program.* A few teachers also indicated (in informal settings) that the policy of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to regard placements as retention, for school evaluation purposes, discourages schools from placing students; therefore, they suggested, most students simply get promoted.

Retention rates aside, however, given that, from the outset, TEA encouraged program diversity and experimentation among the districts receiving Retention Reduction funds, particularly in the area of alternative assessment, **the program seems to have met most of its other goals**, chiefly, improving students' foundation for second and third grade, developing and using alternative assessment instruments such as portfolios, and training teachers to use the "accelerating" methods and materials of the summer program during the regular school year.

Despite District policy and the program's successes, **the issue of student achievement and further intervention for students to catch them up with their peers ("acceleration") remains.** The District's policy on placement requires an alternative program for students who "fall two years or more below grade level in reading, mathematics, or both." The first-

year ALP evaluation found that no commonly used standard of reading achievement was employed on a districtwide basis. In other words, "performing on grade level" has not been defined for each grade in terms of specific performance indicators. This fact suggests that teachers have to use their own judgment or school norms to determine what a student should know to be promoted, a situation that hardly leads to a systematic norm for student achievement. If it is not possible to determine uniformly where a student is performing relative to grade level, the District's policy on placement is undercut. Further, there does not seem to be any systematic process for determining the needs of students who require placement rather than promotion; neither does there appear to be any systematic provision for identifying alternative programs for placed students based on these needs.

Teachers need all the resources they can get to know what their students have achieved and how to propel them forward along a learning continuum that will prepare them for life. Retention has been detrimental for many students. Studies have shown that, on the whole, students who are retained do not catch up with their peers and that they are at greater risk of dropping out of school than students who are not retained. Yet simply passing students along without any attention to their continuing needs is not helpful either. If teachers are to continue placing students, the District needs to ensure that students who need a little more help will get the attention they need through intervention programs that support them. Indeed, District policy *requires* that students who have been retained or placed and who still fall two years or more below grade level in reading, mathematics, or both will be placed in a *program designed for rapid progress* in language arts, reading, and mathematics (emphasis added).

ALP is a possible candidate for that intervention role in language arts/reading. (Recommendations for program improvement are listed in the "Executive Summary.") By design, the program is adaptable to different student learning styles and achievement levels, and evaluation of the summer program indicates that it can be used successfully to improve reading skills. ALP is also flexible in its design structure. The District could use this program as an after-school program, integrate it into the general curricula, or continue it as a summer program. *Further study will be required, however, to determine if ALP students' achievement has been accelerated to a level comparable to that of their peers, and to assess whether students need additional help to be successful in the second or third grade.*

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The Accelerating Literacy Program: 1994-95 Final Report

Introduction

Program Rationale

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) developed its Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) in 1993 to provided additional support for students who were having trouble passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in the elementary grades. At the time the program was developed, 13 Austin schools were either on the AISD "C" list of schools "in need of required improvement" (i.e., less than 25% of students passing all sections of the most recent TAAS) or on the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) list of schools that are "clearly unacceptable" (less than 20% of students passing all sections of the fourth-grade TAAS). "Failure" for these schools and students, many educators would assert, begins much same kinds of academic foundation to which some of their peers have had access, and when the schools do not bridge the gap in earlier grades between what the students know and what they need to know.

When schools have been unsuccessful at bridging that gap, teachers and principals traditionally have had to choose between passing students who are unprepared for the next grade or retaining them. Even with the alternative of "placing" students permitted in AISD policy, an early intervention program was needed to "accelerate" the progress of low-achieving students so that they could achieve on a par with their peers. (Being *placed* is defined as the situation that occurs when an elementary student who has not met the requirements for passing his/her grade level is put in the next grade with the hope that further intervention will help the student catch up with her/his peers.)

Selection of the Accelerating Literacy Program

Campus and District administrators recognized that the ability to read well is essential to success in all other subject areas in which the students needed help. They researched programs designed to deliver concentrated reading instruction to a targeted group of "at-risk" students. With an eye toward either an extended school day and/or school year, and working through the Region XIII Education Service Center, these educators selected the Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP). Education Consultant Services (ECS) of Imperial Beach, California offered in-service training for teachers and administrators built upon a philosophy of curriculum flexibility based on the needs of individual students. ECS's in-service had grown out of experiments in reading interventions in the South Bay (CA) Union School District, a district demographically similar to AISD, and with similarly low reading

achievement within its "at-risk" populations. Furthermore, the mechanics of the program resembled certain intervention procedures used at AISD's Ortega Elementary School, which once had low achievement but has substantially improved its TAAS scores.

Working with South Bay Union School District personnel, ECS created the Accelerating Literacy Program, a reading curriculum characterized by intensive reading instruction, with roots in the Reading Recovery/Whole Language Program developed by New Zealand educator, Dr. Marie Clay. The training material provided by ECS claims that New Zealand has the highest literacy rate in the world. *The Accelerating Literacy Program varies from the Reading Recovery model in that it is adapted for small classrooms, usually six to eight students, rather than one-to-one instruction.* The ALP is characterized by the following:

- Early intervention,
- Short-term, intense help,
- Building on strengths,
- Focus on how-to,
- Action oriented,
- Accelerated progress,
- Reading/writing connection,
- Focus on meaning,
- Sound-letter relationship,
- Flexibility, and
- Staff development.

AISD educators also identified parental involvement as an important resource for improving the reading achievement of program participants. As District educators began planning the ALP, they began identifying methods of integrating parental involvement in the program. A series of summer workshops was planned to educate parents on strategies and activities for developing and furthering their children's reading education at home. In addition, a Parent-Student Reading Activity Log was sent home with the students.

Program Funding

In response to a request for proposals (RFP) issued by TEA's Division of Accelerated Instruction, AISD submitted a proposal for funding the Accelerating Literacy Program in December, 1993. The District applied for a grant equaling $298,132 to fund the program for the 1993-94 school year. The grant was approved by TEA at the reduced amount of $223,599 on April 27, 1994. On October 1, 1994, AISD submitted an application to renew the grant for the 1994-95 school year. The first and second years' budgets are detailed in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

ACCELERATING LITERACY PROGRAM BUDGETS

Class/Object	1993-94	1994-95
Payroll Costs	$126,342	$175,728
Purchased and Contracted Services	16,165	13,500
Supplies and Materials	77,577	30,871
Other Operating Expenses	3,515	3,500
Total Direct Costs	**$223,599**	**$223,599**

Some realignment in the program design was required for the first year because the grant was funded late and at a reduced amount. The position of school improvement planner included in the application was eliminated. With the exception of two schools, all campuses ran a four-week program during the summers of 1994 and 1995.

Outlook for Program Continuation

The Accelerating Literacy Program was funded by the Texas Education Agency's Division of Accelerated Instruction. The Texas Legislature awarded the District a Retention Reduction grant in 1993 and funded a continuation grant in 1994. The funding for the Retention Reduction grant has not been continued by the Texas Legislature beyond the 1994-95 school year, although the program has an optional extended year.

Program Description

The Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) as developed by Evaluation Consultant Services (ECS) was chosen for implementation in the 1993-94 summer session because of its reported success in a comparable environment (i.e., the South Bay (CA) Union School District). The curriculum is flexible enough that it can be used as a stand-alone program (such as AISD's program) or as an adjunct to regular school year reading instruction.

The thematic principle upon which the program operates is that of integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities into a whole language approach to instruction. The program seeks to "accelerate" the learning process by building on students' successes. According to the theory of the program, when a teacher determines that a student has mastered text at a given level, the teacher should immediately challenge the student at a higher level. According to the ALP instruction manual, this objective is pursued through the following steps:

- Evaluating the reading process through miscue analysis;
- Applying the four types of reading[1] in whole language instruction;
- Using effective questioning strategies in guided process reading;
- Assessing and monitoring reading and writing behaviors; and
- Using predicting/confirming activities and mapping techniques that clarify thinking.

The 13 campuses involved in the Accelerating Literacy Program were selected on the basis of poor performance by their fourth-grade TAAS takers. Each campus, and in fact each teacher, was allowed great latitude in designing a course of instruction to meet the needs of the students. The level of coordination between classes varied from campus to campus, although in most cases periodic staff meetings were held. During these meetings, the lead teacher could facilitate strategy sessions, answer questions, and distribute materials. The frequency of these meetings was determined by the staff.

Staffing

Five lead teachers were each assigned responsibility for two campuses; one lead teacher was responsible for three campuses. Each school had one parent-training specialist (PTS) for the program. Most of the schools had four teachers; one school had five teachers, and two others ended the program with three because of lack of attending students. The staff seemed very

[1] The four types of reading in whole language instruction are: 1) Read Aloud, 2) Shared Reading, 3) Guided Process Reading, and 4) Silent Sustained Reading. These reading types were included in the initial training in 1994.

committed to the program and their students. A few of the teachers and PTSs went out of their way to pick up students on their way to school and dropped them off in the afternoon.

One of the District's Chapter 1 coordinators acted as the ALP coordinator, although that position was not included in the program budget. As a result, her time was somewhat stretched by the requirements of managing a program that took place on 13 campuses besides her responsibilities as Chapter 1 coordinator. The program coordinator kept up with the program deadlines, planned the training workshops, planned and facilitated information meetings, and performed miscellaneous other duties related to the program as a whole. The individual campus programs were the responsibility of the principal.

Training

In April 1994, trainers from ECS conducted a three-day, 15-hour workshop on the Accelerating Literacy Program curriculum for AISD teachers and administrators, most of whom participated in the 1994 summer program. Release time was given to participating personnel. Among the main features of the program were lesson planning, diagnosis of particular problems by charting running records, miscue analysis training, and information on books and materials.

A second 15-hour workshop was conducted by a consultant from ECS on June 20-21, 1994 for a group of kindergarten and second-grade teachers who would be utilizing some of the ALP techniques in their classrooms during the 1994-95 school year. Training the second group of teachers was intended to help ensure continuity in student learning and support. A brief questionnaire, developed by the ORE, was given at the conclusion of the second workshop. Responses to the questionnaire reflected general satisfaction with and enthusiasm for the program. A few of the teachers did indicate that they felt that the amount of material covered by this workshop was too much to be absorbed in two days.

After the data were collected from the first summer session, it was determined that the teachers needed more training on conducting the running records assessment. In October 1994, 12 hours of training specifically on the running records was conducted by AISD staff involved in the Reading Recovery program. Four hours of training were dedicated to general lesson planning topics. In April 1995, two eight-hour sessions were conducted, one on the reading aspects of the curriculum and the other on the writing curriculum.

Program Resources

There were great disparities between the resources available at different campuses. Through a different grant, some campuses had computers, complete with technicians, available. Some schools did not even have access to telephones and copiers. Since the program took place during the summer, District services were greatly diminished; e.g., school mail was not distributed on a daily basis.

Population Served

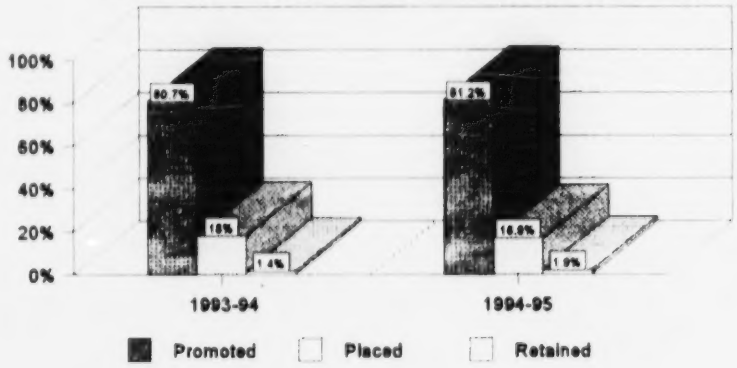
Figure 2 illustrates ALP's sex and ethnic distribution during each of the program years. Students were selected for the program based on teacher recommendation. *The selection criterion was that all students in the program should be in danger of being placed or retained for the next academic year.* As Figure 3 shows, the vast majority of students in the program had been promoted at the end of the academic year.[2] In fact, of 372 ALP students in the 1994-95 program, only 70 (19%) were recommended to be placed or retained.

FIGURE 2
ACCELERATING LITERACY PROGRAM
DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

SEX	1993-94	1994-95
Male	48%	53%
Female	52%	47%
ETHNICITY		
Hispanic	53%	57%
African American	44%	38%

In 1994-95, the program expanded officially to include second graders. Sixty-nine students who were in the 1993-94 program were recommended for and enrolled in the 1994-95 program. At the end of the school year, none of these students had been recommended for retention, and slightly fewer of them (15.9%) had been recommended for placement.

FIGURE 3
ALP PLACED, PROMOTION, AND RETENTION STATUS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROGRAM



[2]Only 295 of the participants are included in the 1993-94 statistic. Seventy-two students are not included because of inability to obtain correct student identification numbers.

Evaluation Overview

In 1993-94, AISD's Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) was assigned the responsibility of evaluating the program chosen for the Retention Reduction grant. An evaluation consultant, reporting to ORE's senior evaluator, was contracted to fulfill the design and execution of the evaluation (see ORE Publication Number 93.24). The second-year evaluation begun by ORE continued under the Department of Performance Audit and Evaluation (A&E), which was formed in January 1995. Another evaluation contractor was employed to conduct the 1994-95 evaluation.

Program Revisions

Several changes took place between the submission of the grant proposal and its subsequent completion. Program objectives and evaluation questions were changed (see below), the evaluation contractor changed between the two summer programs, and the program structure changed on some campuses.

The program objectives changed from the submission date to the implementation date of the first year. In the original proposal submitted to the Texas Education Agency, four major program objectives were defined:

1. All students who participated in the Accelerating Literacy Program will avoid the need to be retained;
2. Students will have a stronger foundation for second grade, as shown by at least a four-level gain on the diagnostic running record in reading;
3. Parents will become partners in the educational process as shown by their participation in workshops, which stress home teaching strategies and the development of homemade materials and learning activities; and
4. A school improvement planner will continue to expand literacy intervention efforts in these schools.

The program objectives for the 1993-94 school year were amended as follows:

Objective #2 was changed to read:

> Students will have a stronger foundation for second grade, as shown by at least a *two-level* gain on the diagnostic running record in reading.

Objective #4 was eliminated.

> The program was not completely funded and reductions had to be made. It was decided that this position could be eliminated without substantially reducing the program impact.

Objective #1 was problematic because of District policies discouraging retention. Information

gathered the first year of the program in staff surveys and informal interviews indicated that *very few of the teachers and principals would have retained first-grade students with or without the program*. For the second year of the program, the wording of the objective was changed so that students who would have been *placed* were selected for the program, as well as students who would have been retained. The change simply clarified the selection process.

Objective #2 was changed from a four-level gain to a two-level gain based on a clearer understanding of the reading levels determined through the use of the running record form (see "Performance Indicators" below).

The change in the evaluation contractor occurred on October 20, 1994. The new contractor had less than a month to acquaint herself with the program and to take over the evaluation before the first intersession program began November 17, 1994. Information and assistance were provided by the former contractor, the senior evaluator, and the program coordinator to help orient her quickly.

The program structure changed on some campuses. After working with the program for one summer, the staff at three schools decided that an important distinction between this program and the regular school year needed to be made. They believed that the students should not be made to feel as if they were losing their summer break. These schools changed their program schedule from a five-day, four-hour program to a four-day, 4 ½-hour program. The students brought a sack lunch to eat in the late morning. Two other schools became year-round schools; therefore, they implemented the program in two two-week sessions while the schools were having intersession break.

The Evaluation Questions

The 1994-95 evaluation proceeded with these program revisions in mind. A basic set of evaluation questions was developed to determine the effectiveness of the program based on the objectives, as well as on other District objectives. The 1994-95 evaluation questions were as follows:

1. Do students in the Accelerating Literacy Program make significant achievement gains? Are the gains made by students in this program greater than they would be in other AISD school programs? Are these gains sustained over a period of time?

2. Is the Accelerating Literacy Program different from other classroom interventions being implemented in the District? If so, how? If not, to what other intervention(s) is it similar?

3. Are parents being encouraged to be involved in the program? What kind of parent involvement is being encouraged? What methods are being used to encourage parent involvement? How effective are these methods?

4. Are teachers being effectively trained and supported to use any unfamiliar teaching strategies

involved in the use of acceleration methods?

5. Are teachers trained and able to develop and use portfolios for student assessment? Were student portfolios effectively used for student assessment? Were they used in student/parent/teacher communication about student achievement?

6. Is the Accelerating Literacy Program a cost-effective program worthy of continuing and/or expanding?

The 1994-95 evaluation is limited in that the evaluation design did not afford a determination of how much of the developmental progress made by the students in the program would have been made without the program. A control group design for comparing the performance of program students to that of an equilavent group of nonprogram students would normally be employed for this purpose. Since standardized test scores were barred from the evaluation by TEA, however, the evaluation could not avail itself of the extensive test information on hand for comparing student performance. Instead, the same alternative assessments by which the progress of program students were measured would have had to be carried out on a group of comparable nonprogram students. Since some of these measures required extensive teacher training, a control group design was not practical. Therefore, while the evaluation could determine whether progress was made by program students, the evaluation could not rule out the possibility that the same amount or more progress would have been made by these students using another program or no program at all. Nonetheless, a range of performance indicators were employed in the evaluation, as described below.

Performance Indicators

Good performance indicators are well aligned with the program objectives. Those indicators should provide the foundation for the assessment tools used to evaluate the program. Since standardized tests were against the philosophy of the program and not allowed by the grant, alternative assessments were required to determine the effectiveness of the program. Alternative assessment provides a different type of information from that provided by standardized tests. Often, alternative assessments can provide everyone, from students and parents to the superintendent, with actionable information about what the children know related to what we say they need to know. Some standardization, however, is necessary for any assessment to be useful on the level of programmatic evaluation. The standardization required is:

1) A standard of expectation for student success,
2) A standard definition of the curriculum mastery objectives and indicators, and
3) A standard training program for teachers on what the indicators mean and how to rate them.

These three tenets can provide the foundation for a system of cross-checking teacher assessment and program performance. An often-expressed concern is that teachers will inflate student

achievement on the performance indicators used for standardization in alternative assessment. Portfolios should support teachers' assessments by including developmental demonstrations of the students' progress along a continuum of achievement. Also, a system of cross-checking can be used to verify teachers' assessments. By using other teachers in the program, or the lead teachers, assessments can be checked to make sure that expectations and objectives are consistent across the program.

Since alternative assessment is not standard practice throughout AISD, the necessity of using such assessments required the creation and/or adaptation of several assessment instruments, some of which were unfamiliar to both the program and evaluation staff. These assessment tools were:

The Portfolio Assessment Form. At a minimum, portfolio assessment is simply compiling samples of the students' work, which represents their progress along a learning continuum. At best, a portfolio teaches young people to take responsibility for their own learning by providing conceptual structures for self-reflection. While it is not necessary that students and parents be involved in the process, research has shown that they can be a great enhancement to the analysis process. By involving students in the process, teachers can empower students to take charge of their own education by giving them the tools to evaluate their work and measure their progress. A portfolio also provides parents with concrete evidence of their child's progress in real terms, instead of constructed generalizations (e.g., letter grades). Involving students and parents in portfolio assessment is a lot of work for everyone involved, but it promotes a relationship among parents, teachers, and students that says, "All of our opinions about the students' progress are valuable."

The most important thing the program must do to make portfolio assessment successful is to provide teachers and campus administrators with the necessary resources to do their job well. Explicit definitions of the program's expectations of student learning detailed by grade, and how that learning is to be evaluated, are absolutely required. *It is impossible to do a systemwide assessment of portfolios without systemwide definitions of assessment criteria and indicators.*

The next step is definition of the portfolio itself. There are many different types of portfolios and equally as many opinions as to which is best to use in portfolio assessment. One of the most difficult processes in choosing the type of portfolios that will be developed is often deciding what will go into the portfolio. One option is to select work that demonstrates important educational milestones or progress. This type of portfolio can be the most difficult to develop, but it offers students an opportunity to identify their own milestones and developments, which can help the students take ownership of their educational development.

The Portfolio Assessment Form used for ALP was designed to be completed by the teachers. The form is simply a checklist of the assessment tools which were to be included in the portfolio and an inquiry about the students' progress and the portfolio's use.

The Acceleration Literacy Program Developmental Checklist. To measure student progress during the program, teachers were asked to rate each student's development in the areas of reading, writing, and listening/speaking using a list of 26 learning indicators at the beginning and end of the program. The Development Checklist was adapted from several sources and based on the developmental indicators teachers said that they looked for in their classrooms.

Teachers used a five-part scale to rate each student's abilities in writing (13 indicators), reading (seven indicators), and listening/speaking (six indicators). The rating scale was defined as follows:

- Student will be considered to demonstrate a skill or behavior **consistently** if s/he is able to demonstrate it 85 to 100 percent of the time;
- Student will be considered to demonstrate a skill or behavior **most of the time** if s/he is able to demonstrate it 55 to 85 percent of the time;
- Student will be considered to demonstrate a skill or behavior **occasionally** if s/he is able to demonstrate it 15 to 55 percent of the time;
- Student will be considered to demonstrate a skill or behavior **not yet** if s/he is able to demonstrate it less than 15 percent of the time; and
- **Not Rated** should be used if the skill or behavior was not observed.

For analytic purposes the scale was converted to a numeric format, in which

1 = Not Yet, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Most of the Time, and 4 = Consistently.

When "Not Rated" was selected, or the teacher's response was ambiguous or nonexistent, the item was not used in calculations. Comparison of the pre- and postprogram assessment was used to measure students' general and specific development in reading, writing, and communication.

The Running Record Form. This form, borrowed from Reading Recovery, was intended as a more specific indicator of student progress in reading accuracy and self-correction abilities. The teacher checks off each word the student reads correctly and notes the type of miscues, or errors, the student makes on incorrectly identified or pronounced words. After the reading the teacher records the number of "running words" in the text and the number of miscues the student made. The teacher then calculates the accuracy rate (Number of Correct Words/ Total Running Words) and the self-correction rate (Self-Corrected Error/Total Errors). Based on this information the teacher indicates the text level of the story in relation to the student's reading ability (i.e., Easy, Instructional, Hard). Comparison of the pre- and postprogram assessment was used to measure students' reading development.

The Read-Retell Worksheet. The Read-Retell activity was to be conducted at the beginning and end of the program using the same story. Teachers were instructed to read the story to their students twice or three times if necessary for the students to get meaning from the story but not to memorize it. An assessment form, which asked how many words were used and how clearly and effectively the students retold the story, was provided for each activity. Comparison of the pre- and postprogram assessment was used to measure students' development in writing and comprehension.

The Audiotape Form. The teacher was to have each student make an audiotape of her/his reading. The audiotape should have included two examples of the student's reading, one at the beginning of the program and one at the end of the program. The readings did not need to be the same text. Teachers completed one audiotape form per student to state how much progress was demonstrated on the tape and whether the tape was a true reflection of the student's progress.

Student Interviews. This interview was to be conducted during the last week of the program. Teachers were instructed to be sure students understood that saying that they did not like to read/write was perfectly all right, and they were not to push students for "appropriate" answers. Teachers were also instructed to use whatever terminology was familiar to the student. The purpose of the interview was to determine if the students had literature interaction outside school and of what that interaction consisted.

Parent-Child Reading Activity Log. This form was to be distributed to students on the first day of the program to take home to their parent(s). Parents were to send updated logs to class with their child on Fridays. Parent Training Specialists were to explain the purpose of the log to the parents and follow up with any family which needed help in completing the log and/or other activities. The log was used as a record of parent-child daily reading activity.

Parent and Staff Surveys. The parent surveys were sent home with the students about a week before the end of the program. Parents were to complete the surveys and return them with the students before the last day of the program. Staff surveys were distributed during the last week of the program. (Appendices A and B detail the results of the staff surveys.)

Teachers' Anecdotal Notes. These notes are very informal observations of the student's daily progress in the program. Teachers were asked to record observations as often as possible, but at least once a week. The notes helped the evaluation consultant to be aware of how the students and the teachers were interacting with each other and with the work required by the program.

Informal Interviews with Program Staff. These were simple conversations with various members of the program staff and were totally unsystematic. They ranged in length from a very few minutes to an hour or more.

Findings

Elimination of Students' Need to be Retained

The elimination of students' need to be placed or retained is not currently a measurable objective. First, the program's 1994-95 selection criterion, that all students in the program should be in danger of being placed or retained for the next academic year, lacks specificity and depends, in turn, on a District policy for promoting, placing, and retaining students which itself needs additional definition. AISD policy states that "a student may be placed in the next grade level if the student is achieving to his or her maximum ability, subject to" certain requirements:

1. The student is placed in an alternative program which will meet her/his *identified* needs;
2. Unless a student is only receiving speech/language services, the ARD (Admission, Review, and Dismissal) Committee will make the placement decision for all special education students; and
3. Students who have been retained or placed and who still fall two years or more below grade level in reading, mathematics, or both will be placed in a program designed for rapid progress in language arts, reading, and mathematics.

A method for identifying student needs is not described, nor is the measure of what constitutes "below grade level" performance identified. Although the state-defined "essential elements" provide a general framework for what students ought to learn at each grade level, the District lacks specific performance indicators for each grade and subject area. In reading, the 1993-94 ALP evaluation found "no common set of reading achievement standards." Therefore, the program's objective of having all students out of danger of being placed or retained (i.e., performing at or above grade level) cannot be met until performance requirements are defined. The absence of districtwide definition has meant that teachers are forced to use their own discretion or school norms to determine what a student should know to be promoted--or, conversely, placed or retained (the program's identification criterion).

Second, AISD has discouraged the retention of elementary students for many years, and high percentages of students were promoted each year even before the advent of ALP. Although ALP teachers were able to supply reasons that students needed to be placed or retained, in 1993-94 and 1994-95, respectively, 80.7% and 81.2% were promoted. A few teachers also indicated (in informal settings) that the TEA's policy to regard placements as retention, for school evaluation purposes, discourages many schools from placing students; therefore, they suggested, most students simply get promoted.

Improve Students' Foundation for Second/Third Grade

Reading

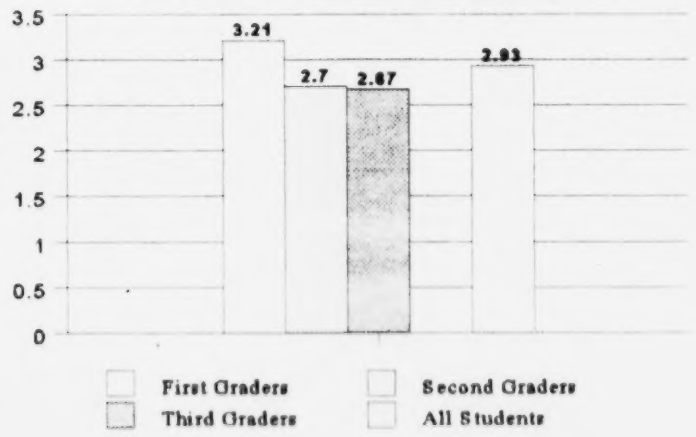
Running Records. Many problems with the first-year implementation of the running records were not completely eradicated in the second year. In spite of more than 12 hours of training on implementing the running record assessments, many teachers did not include enough information on the data collection forms to make the data useful. *Overall, only 155 student records were usable out of 372 students (41.67%).*

In addition to the number of forms that were unusable, 34.8% of the usable records showed no change in text level. Although it is likely that "no change" is accurate in some of these 54 records, whole classes showed no change in some cases. Also, because of the way the initial assessment was conducted in a few cases, the accuracy of the initial reading level of those students is questionable. Better communication between the evaluation consultant and some of the teachers as to how the assessment was to be conducted might have made the data collection more accurate.

In spite of these problems, **the usable data indicated that the students gained more than the two text-level achievement gain that the program predicted. Overall, the running records indicated that ALP students increased their reading text level an average of 2.93 reading levels.** First graders improved even more than second and third graders in the program, with an average increase of 3.21 reading levels on the running records assessment (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

AVERAGE CHANGE IN READING TEXT-LEVEL -- RUNNING RECORDS



Developmental Checklist. **Analysis of the ALP Developmental Checklist of Learning Indicators indicated that ALP students made statistically significant gains in their overall reading skills for the second consecutive year.** Students participating in the 1994-95 Accelerating Literacy Program gained an average 0.48 levels in reading skills (based on a four-point scale, where "4" is the highest possible rating). See Figure 5. Students in the 1993-94 ALP had average reading skill gains of 0.47 on the Developmental Checklist.

Interestingly, the second graders performed best on this assessment, although the first graders averaged greater increases in achievement on the running record assessment. Possible reasons for the difference between the results of the two assessment tools include: 1) The Running Record assesses either different skills or only some of the skills reflected in the checklist; and 2) All of the records for the Developmental Checklist were usable; therefore, more accurate information was gathered by that assessment than for the Running Records where only 41.67% of the records were usable. If the two assessments continue to be used, and assessment information from the Running Record is improved, the first reason could be eliminated as a possibility.

FIGURE 5

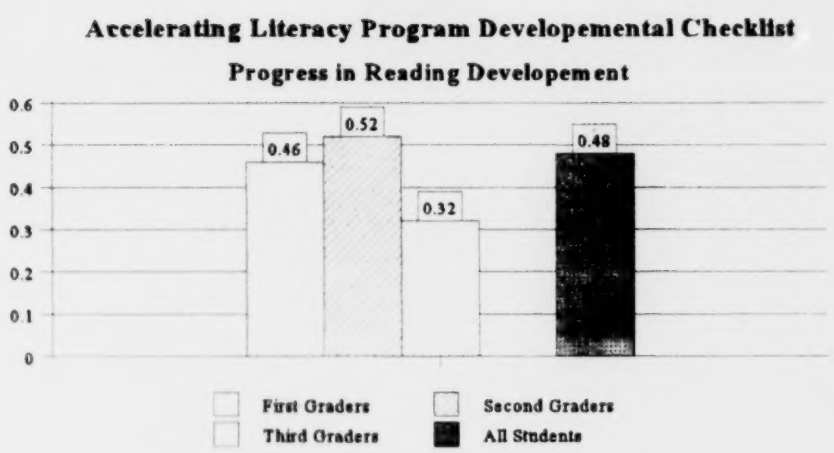
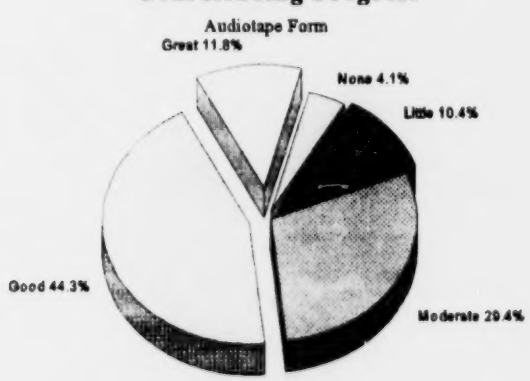


FIGURE 6



Audiotape Form. Analysis of the Audiotape Form shows that the majority (56.1%) of ALP students made "good" or "great" progress in their oral reading during the 1994-95 program. On the assessment form, teachers indicated that the audiotape records were 96% accurate reflections of the student reading progress during the program.

Teachers recorded greater progress for the first graders on this assessment, once again. Of first graders, 62.2% made good or great progress.

Teacher Survey. Of the 28 teachers who responded to the Teacher Survey, 100% indicated that, overall, the program was very effective or somewhat effective in improving the students' ability to construct meaning in reading activities.

Writing and Listening Comprehension

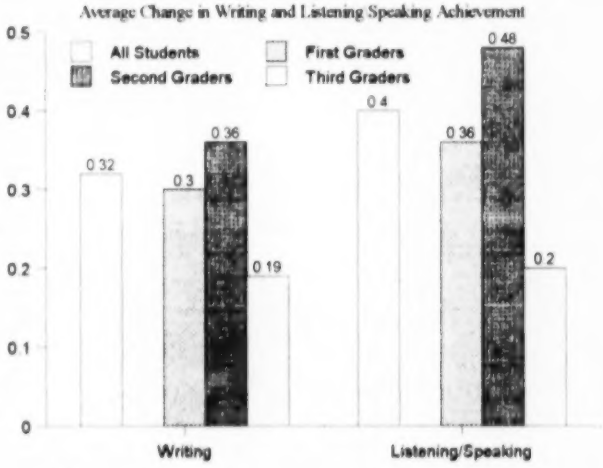
Read-Retell. ALP students averaged a one-level increase in their writing level based on the ALP Scale of Writing Development adapted from *The Whole Language Catalogue: Supplement on Authentic Assessment*.[3] Overall, students used 29.1 more words to retell the story in the postprogram assessment. Teachers indicated that 20.5% of the time students were more able to read their own retelling of the story. The students' stories were more likely to make sense 40.7% of the time, and it was more likely that the story had the same conceptual meaning as the original story 38.7% of the time.

This assessment was not available for the two schools, Metz and Winn, which did two-week intersessions rather than the summer program. The assessment results are based on analysis of 168 records.

Developmental Checklist. **In addition to reading, the ALP students also made substantial progress in both writing and communicating during the program.** Analysis of the writing and listening/speaking scores indicates that the progress made in these areas (.32 and .40 incremental changes based on a four-point scale) was not as great as was made in reading (.48); however, according to the philosophy of the program, the improvement is assumed to be interrelated. If the gains made in writing and listening/speaking did contribute to the gains in reading, the converse may also true: as the students continue to improve their reading skills, their skills in both written and oral communication should improve.

FIGURE 7

ALP DEVELOPMENTAL CHECKLIST



Once again, the Developmental Checklist was not designed with third graders in mind; therefore, they would begin the program already very near the highest performance indicators included on the checklist. This higher preprogram level may account for the lower average change seen in the writing and listening/speaking skills.

Teacher Survey. Of the 28 teachers who responded to the Teacher Survey, 100% indicated that the program was "very effective" (52.4%) or "somewhat effective" (47.6%) in improving the students' ability to construct meaning in writing activities.

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[3]See Appendix C.

Interest in Literacy

Teacher Survey. Of the 28 teachers surveyed, 95.2% indicated that their students were "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to choose to participate in literacy activities in their free time more often after the program. When asked if the program helped their students to become more self-guided in their education, 89.5% said that it had. The majority of teachers who went on to explain their answers said that students volunteered to engage in reading or writing activities when they finished their work. Many teachers also said that the students worked longer and/or more successfully at self-correcting before asking for help.

Student Interviews. Teachers conducted student interviews at the end of the program to get information on what students were feeling about reading and writing. Students indicated, overall, that they enjoyed reading and writing. Only six students (1.6%) indicated that they did not like to read, and 16 (4.3%) indicated that they did not like to write. The reasons students gave for liking to read and write were encouraging. *Students said that they like to learn, that reading and writing was fun, that it made them proud of themselves, and that learning to read and write gave them hope for their future.*

Increase Parent Involvement

Very few of the teachers indicated that the parents had seen their child's portfolio. Although 38.1% of the respondents to the teacher survey indicated that they had less contact with parents during the program than they normally would, 42.9% indicated that they had at least a little bit more contact with parents. Of the 372 students who participated in the program, 130 (34.9%) returned reading logs to indicate that a parent was reading with the student. According to the teachers, some parents did read to the children but did not turn in the reading log for the last week.

Most (87.5%) parent-training specialists (PTSs) indicated that they held parent meetings before and during the summer program. Although few of the parents indicated that they attended these meetings, one PTS reported that she had offered to provide transportation for parents. Other types of parent involvement that were encouraged included classroom visitations, acting as teacher aides, and working one-on-one with their child(ren) at home. PTSs contacted parents by telephone, letters, and home visits. Some PTSs sent pamphlets home on positive parenting topics.

Many PTSs and lead teachers indicated that there was no difference between the methods of contacting parents and encouraging parent involvement in the program and during the regular school year. Others said that this program was better because staff had daily contact with parents.

Overall Program Success

Overall, the program seems to have met most of its goals. All of the teachers surveyed indicate that the students made "somewhat more" (45%) or "much more" (55%) progress than they would have in a typical four-week period during the regular school year. Teachers were generally pleased with the training that they received, and the portfolios were used successfully in the program. Teachers reported 96.3% of the time that portfolios were accurate representations of the students' achievement during the program. The teachers also indicated, in some cases, where portfolios were not representative of student achievement that it was because the students were excessively absent.

The one thing that the parent-training specialists seemed to want most from the District was more role clarification and training. Whereas teachers and lead teachers had some specific role definition, the program coordinator left the PTS's role to be defined by the campus staff. The program coordinator felt strongly that the role clarification should come from the campus level so that PTSs could be used as each individual campus needed. PTSs indicated that the fact that there had been little definition of their role during either the school year or the program put them in the position of defining their own roles. Some PTSs said that they had not been offered any training for the job during the regular school year. Although a training session was offered for parent-training specialists before the 1993-94 summer program, no training was offered in conjunction with the 1994-95 program.

The parent-training specialists were the resource most often identified by the teachers necessary to making the program effective (38.9%). Other important resources were the lead teacher, other teachers who had prior experience in the program, and the training workshops. Lead teachers said that all of the resources and materials for the program were necessary to make it a success. The Portfolio Assessment Worksheet, the instructional materials, and training were mentioned specifically.

The program also accomplished one of TEA's stated goals--to train teachers so that more acceleration could take place in the regular classroom. With the exception of two campuses, Winn and Metz, all of the program teachers attended training workshops. The response to these workshops was very positive. On a postworkshop survey, the vast majority of participants (91.9%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the workshop content was relevant and useful even though there was an even mix of participants who were and who were not familiar with the material. The comments about the sessions included high praise for the presenter and recommendations that more teachers be offered these workshops.

The overwhelming majority of teachers (92.8%) indicated that they would continue to use the methods and materials of the program during the regular school year. Teachers said that the record-keeping forms and the fact that the program methods are based in a whole language approach will be useful in the regular class. Although it seems that teachers need more opportunity for supervised use of the assessment tools, until they become more comfortable with

the techniques, teachers indicated that having written records of student progress was beneficial. Some teachers said that being able to keep track of small gains using the portfolio was also beneficial to students who needed a boost in their self-esteem. Some teachers were concerned about the time it would take to conduct pre- and postprogram assessments in the regular classroom. One teacher suggested that classroom volunteers would be necessary to facilitate the program during the regular class day.

Campus-based program managers were not the norm during the regular school year; as a result some of the preprogram planning was not adequately handled. Although notices were sent to all the schools informing them of funding for supplies and materials and recommended deadlines for ordering, several campuses had trouble receiving supplies before the start of the program. In some cases this was because they did not order their supplies before the program planning period started. In other cases, it was simply a matter of slow delivery or the supplies waiting at the warehouse.

Finally, some teachers, lead teachers and parent-training specialists indicated either in informal discussions or on the survey that they felt that many of the students needed more time to be successful in the program. Some staff indicated that they could have developed a better program if they had students for four longer days and used the fifth day for planning, and making parent contact. (Two campuses did hold class four days a week; however, extra planning time was not budgeted.)

Cost-effectiveness of the Program

The Accelerating Literacy Program was almost entirely grant-funded for 1993-94 and 1994-95. (AISD made in-kind contributions of buildings, utilities, janitorial services, etc.) This year marks the end of the program funding, at least in this form. If the program is to continue, funds must be sought from another source. The cost-effectiveness of the program should be considered to determine whether to seek further funding for this program.

The cost of the Accelerating Literacy Program can be examined in a number of different ways. One way is the *cost per student*, obtained by dividing the program budget by the number of students served.

Program budget # students served	=	$223,599 296	=	$755.40 per student

Another way to express program cost is the *cost per student per hour of the program*, or *cost per contact hour*, which is calculated by dividing the cost per student by the number of classroom hours allotted for the program.

Cost per student Hours of the program	=	$755.40 80	=	$9.44 per student- program hour

The **cost-effectiveness** of the program may be expressed as the *cost per student per unit of effect*, calculated by dividing the cost per student by the average increase in reading skill level.

Cost per student Effect on reading skill	=	$755.40 0.48	=	$1,573.75 per student per unit of increase in reading achievement

Cost-effectiveness may also be expressed as the *total cost for all students per unit of effect*, which can be computed as the ratio of program budget divided by the average increase in reading skill level.[4]

Program budget Effect on reading skill	=	$223,599 0.48	=	$465,831 unit increase in reading achievement by all students

[4]The 1993-94 evaluation report incorrectly reported the cost-effect ratio (total program budget/mean gain(loss) in reading achievement levels) as $47,574. The correct ratio is $223,599/0.47= $475,743.

This cost-effectiveness measure can also be determined by multiplying the per-student cost per unit of increase in reading achievement by the number of students served by the program.

$1,573.75 per student per unit of increase in reading achievement	x	296 # of students served	=	$465,830 unit increase in reading achievement by all students

Finally, program cost-effectiveness may be expressed as the *cost per student per program hour per unit of effect*, which is calculated by dividing the cost per student per program hour by the average increase in reading level.

Cost per student-program hour Effect on reading skill	= $9.44 0.48	=	$19.67 per student per program hour per unit of increase in reading achievement

Of the three cost-effectiveness measures, the first (*cost per student per unit of effect*) might be the most useful. In other words, **for each student served to attain an increase of 1.0 in reading level as measured by the Developmental Checklist, it would cost $1,574 per student**. Using this measure, the 1994-95 ALP was less cost-effective than the 1993-94 ALP ($1,574 versus $1,296, respectively); however, using the *total cost for all students per unit of effect* from each year, the 1994-95 program was more cost-effective than the 1993-94 program ($465,831 versus $475,743). The per-student contact hour costs of the two years' programs were roughly equal--$9.50 in 1993-94 and $9.44 in 1994-95. Because the same amount was budgeted each year for the program, and program effectiveness was almost identical (0.47 and 0.48 gains in reading level), the differences in the costs between the years are attributable to the number of students served and the number of program contact hours. In 1993-94, 367 students were served, 71 more students than in 1994-95. In 1994-95, however, students received more program contact--a total of 23,680 contact hours, compared with 23,520 in 1993-94. The more students served by a program, the less expensive the program will be, but the fewer the number of contact hours, the more expensive the program will be, as indicated in the 1993-94 ALP report. These offsetting differences between the two years' programs result in the approximately equivalent contact hour costs, indicating that the programs were about the same in cost-effectiveness.

However they are expressed, *it should be noted that program costs represent expenditures above what the District already spends on a per-student basis*. The District should consider whether other options are available by which the same gains could be accomplished. Other benefits of the program, such as training teachers to use the whole language and portfolio methods in their regular classrooms, should also be factored into any program funding decision.

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Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) - Summer 1995
Teacher Survey

1. At the beginning of the program, what skills needed to be accelerated which would have made it appropriate to 'place' or retain the Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) students?

TEACHERS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS (multiple responses)
Lack of comprehension.	3.03%	1
Students need more exposure to literature.	6.06	2
Students' inability to sequence stories.	9.09	3
Students need to work on reading strategies.	15.15	5
Students need to work on Phonics.	21.21	7
Students need to work on reading and or writing skills.	27.27	9
Students need to work on fluency in their reading.	6.06	2
Low self-esteem.	6.06	2
Students aren't taking instruction well enough to be successful.	3.03	1
I don't know.	3.03	1

2. How did you use ALP students' strength for working on the areas in which the students needed acceleration? (Please give an example or two)

TEACHERS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS (multiple responses)
Used prior knowledge of stories.	4.55%	1
Built on familiar word/word chunks.	9.09	2
Reminded students about using strategies they had already mastered.	9.09	2
Stronger readers read to weaker readers.	9.09	2
Listened to students read every day.	13.64	3
Students chose their own writing topics.	9.09	2
Students made their own dictionaries.	4.55	1
Used peer reading.	4.55	1
Other.	36.36	8

3. How did you use portfolios to assess student achievement?

TEACHERS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS (multiple responses)
Compared beginning to ending achievement levels.	53.6%	15
Referred to daily logs.	14.3	4
Running records, in particular, helped keep track of specific strengths/weaknesses.	25.0	7
Built up students self-esteem by showing the students their progress.	3.6	1
Not much.	3.6	1

4. Overall, how effective was the program at improving ALP students' ability to construct meaning in reading activities?

Very effective	Somewhat effective	Somewhat ineffective	Not effective
38.1% (8)	61.9% (13)	0.0	0.0

5. Overall, how effective was the program at improving ALP students' ability to construct meaning in writing activities?

Very effective	Somewhat effective	Somewhat ineffective	Not effective
52.4% (11)	47.6% (10)	0.0	0.0

6. Overall, are the ALP students in your class more likely to choose to participate in literacy activities in their free time than they were at the beginning of the program?

Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Not likely
42.9% (9)	52.4% (11)	4.8% (1)	0.0

7. Did the program help students in your class become more self-guided in their education? (Please explain.)

TEACHERS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS
Yes	89.5%	17
No	10.5%	2

EXPLANATIONS:
Students volunteered more often to read/write independently.
Students compare home reading with school reading.
Student shared reading materials from home with the class.
Students made more successful attempts to self-correct.
(No) My students were ADD.

8. How successful was this program at accelerating student achievement, relative to gains made by students at similar ability levels over a four-week period in a regular class? (Please explain.)

Very successful	Somewhat successful	Somewhat unsuccessful	Not successful
55% (11)	45% (9)	0.0	0.0

EXPLANATIONS:
It was helpful for these students to have materials available during the summer.
The size of the class made it more realistic to offer individual attention.
The emphasis on literacy helped focus the work.

9. How much contact with parents did you have compared to what you would normally have had during your regular school year?

Much more	Somewhat more	A little more	No more	Less
0.0	19.0% (4)	23.8% (5)	19.0% (4)	38.1% (8)

10. How often were portfolios used in discussions with parents about student achievement?

Always	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
0.0	0.0	10.0% (2)	40.0% (8)	50.0% (10)

11. How successful was the program at meeting its stated goals?

Very successful	Somewhat successful	Somewhat unsuccessful	Not successful	Don't know
25.0 (7)	64.3% (18)	3.6% (1)	0.0	7.1% (2)

12. Were the goals of the program properly matched with the needs of the students? Why, or why not?

TEACHERS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS
Yes	88.9%	24
No	3.7%	1
Don't Know	7.4	2

Explanations:
Teachers were able to give students more individual attention.
Pretesting allowed instructional level learning to take place earlier.
Students developed literacy strategies.
Running records indicated students' progress.
Students gained more independence.

13. Of the professional resources and support available to you, which were necessary to make this program a success? What other resources/support did you need?

RESOURCES AVAILABLE	RESOURCES NEEDED
Parent-Training Specialists.	More material.
Lead teacher and other teachers w/prior program experience.	Better communication w/central office.
Training workshops.	More support before the program began.
Planning time.	
Campus-level choice of materials.	
All of the resources available were necessary.	

14. Will you use the portfolios and/or other teaching methods advocated by this program in your regular classes in the future? Why, or why not?

TEACHERS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS
Yes	92.8%	26
No	3.6%	1
Don't know	3.6%	1

Explanations:
Portfolios help keep records.
Sending reading materials home daily was very effective.
The portfolios and teaching methods "work."

Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) - Summer 1995
Parent Training Specialist Survey

1. What kinds of support did you offer students to facilitate their participation in the Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP)?

PARENT-TRAINING SPECIALISTS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS (multiple responses)
Attendance.	37.5%	3
Home visits.	25.0%	2
Worked one-on-one with the students.	37.5%	3
Provided transportation for students.	12.5%	1
Provided incentives for students.	37.5%	3

2. How many of the students had to be picked up from home more than twice weekly to attend ALP classes?

AVERAGE	3

3. How much of your time was spent picking up students at home to bring them to class? (Circle one)

100%-90%	89%-75%	74%-50%	49%-25%	less than 25%
0.0	0.0	25.0% (2)	25.0% (2)	50.0% (4)

4. What kinds of parent involvement were encouraged (e.g., parent training meeting, teacher conferences, classroom volunteer, etc.)?

PARENT-TRAINING SPECIALISTS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS (multiple responses)
Parent workshops	87.5%	7
Classroom visitations	12.5%	1
Survey	12.5%	1

5. How were parents contacted? What kinds of support did you offer parents to facilitate their participation in ALP?

PARENT-TRAINING SPECIALISTS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS (multiple responses)
Letters	62.5%	5
Pamphlets	25.0%	2
Home visits	50.0%	4
Telephone	75%	6
Teachers did home visits	12.5%	1
Newsletter	12.5%	1
Offered parents' transportation to/from parent meetings	12.5%	1

6. How are the methods used by ALP to encourage parental involvement more or less effective than other methods used in the District?

PARENT-TRAINING SPECIALISTS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS (multiple responses)
Don't know/same	37.5%	3
Great having daily contact with parents	37.5%	3
Methods were harder to use due to half-day schedule	12.5%	1

7. Of the professional resources and support available to you, which were necessary to make this program a success? What other resources/support did you need?

PARENT-TRAINING SPECIALISTS' RESPONSES	PERCENT	NUMBERS (multiple responses)
NEEDS:		
No guidelines from District were available.	37.5%	3
Needed buses.	12.5%	1
NECESSARY RESOURCES:		
RIF books - for incentives.	12.5%	1
Adopters provided food, clothing, etc. for students when necessary.	12.5%	1
Good communication with teachers.	12.5%	1

Scale of Writing Development

Level 1 The child-
- attempts to write in scribbles or draws patterns.

Level 2 The child-
- writes alphabet and mock letters scattered around the page.
- writes mock letters.
- pretends to write.

Level 3 The child-
- copies words s\he sees around the room.
- writes alphabet letters and mock letters in a line across the page.

Level 4 The child-
- repeats message.
- has message concept and tells you what the message is.
- uses letters that don't match sounds.
- writes alphabet letter strings.

Level 5 The child-
- labels drawings.
- uses letters that have some connection to sounds.
- writes lists.
- separates words with a space or marker.
- writes a message.
- writes familiar words.

Level 6 The child-
- invents spellings.
- presents a story that is single factual statement.
- presents a message that is understandable.

Level 7 The child-
- writes the start of a story.
- uses both phonics and sight strategies to spell words.
- writes several short sentences.

Level 8 The child-
- writes a short story with a beginning, middle, and an end.
- writes for several different purposes (narrative, expository, and persuasive).
- revises by adding to the story.
- begins to use punctuation.

Level 9 The child-
- includes detail or dialogue, a sense or humor or other emotions.
- retells a familiar story or follows the pattern of a known story or poem.
- uses more conventional spelling.
- willingly revises.

Level 10 The child-
- willingly revises and edits.
- writes creatively and imaginatively.
- writes original poetry.
- writes clearly (the message makes sense).
- uses commas, quotation marks, apostrophes.

Level 11 The child-
- uses a variety of strategies for revision and editing.
- uses writing techniques to build suspense, create humor, etc.

"One School's Adventure in Portfolio Analysis" by L. Lamme and C. Hysmith The Whole Language Catalogue Supplement on Authentic Assessment. pg. 122

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PUBLICATION NUMBER 94.13
APRIL 1996

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